

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 DECLAS 12/31/95
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, XF
SUBJ: INTERIM SETTLEMENT - VIEWS OF YITZHAK NAVON

BEGIN SUMMARY: YITZHAK NAVON, CHAIRMAN OF KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, HAS TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVES PM RABIN HAS NOT YET TAKEN FINAL POSITION ON INTERIM SETTLEMENT, BUT HIS VIEWS, EITHER FOR OR AGAINST, WILL BE DECISIVE IN DETERMINING WHERE GOI COMES OUT. NAVON THINKS ALMOST ANY SHIFT IN EGYPTIAN POSITION WOULD BE HELPFUL AND A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT (E.G. ON WARNING SITES) WOULD SWING BALANCE IN FAVOR OF AGREEMENT. NEXT BEST WOULD BE SOME US "GESTURE" TO OFFSET WHAT IS WIDELY REGARDED HERE AS A HARSH US STANCE IN RECENT WEEKS; PERHAPS A FRIENDLY STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT OR SECRETARY GIVING SOME INDICATION OF VALUE US PLACES ON CONTINUATION OF CLOSE US-ISRAELI TIES.

1. NAVON TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR JULY 2 THAT IN HIS OPINION PM RABIN WAS STILL UNDECIDED ON POSITION HE WOULD TAKE IN CABINET DECISION ON INTERIM AGREEMENT WHICH HE EXPECTED IN "NEXT WEEK OR 10 DAYS." THIS WOULD DEPEND ON CLARIFICATIONS SOUGHT, VIA DINITZ AND OTHERS, FROM USG. NAVON ASSERTED THAT RABIN HAS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED TO HIS KNESSET COMMITTEE IMPORTANCE

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OF US RELATIONSHIP TO ISREAL IN OVERALL CALCULAS

OF ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE WHICH AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT POSES IN ISRAELI EYES. HE THINKS RABIN'S FEBRUARY COMMITMENT TO KNESSET NOT TO GIVE UP PASSES FOR LESS THAN NON-BELLIGERENCY WAS A MISTAKE--WHICH PM NOW RECOGNIZED WAS HEMMING HIM IN. IT ALSO HAD LED TO OVEREMPHASIS ON IMPORTANCE OF PASSES TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY, BOTH TO PUBLIC AND IN RABIN'S OWN THINKING. NAVON SAID THAT HAWKISH OPPONENTS OF AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT HAD SO DISTORTED SECURITY ARGUMENT IN RECENT DAYS THAT HE HAD FELT IMPELLED TO BRING SOME REALISM INTO NATIONAL DEBATE BY MAKING CLEAR--AS HE FORTHRIGHTLY DID ON JUNE 30, THAT VALUE TO ISRAEL OF CONTINUED CLOSE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPLY LINKS WITH THE US WAS OF INCOMPARABLY GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN PASSES. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED BY MANY OF HIS POLITICAL FRIENDS FOR HAVING SPOKEN OUT ON GROUNDS, AMONG OTHERS, THAT THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE EGYPT NOT TO MAKE FURTHER CONCESSIONS. NAVON SAID HE UNDERSTANDS THIS ARGUMENT, BUT WAS CONVINCED THAT TIME HAD ARRIVED TO PLAY ISRAEL'S CARDS AND HE HAD DONE RIGHT THING IN CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. ADDRESSING QUESTION OF PLITICAL SUPPORT FOR GOVT WHICHEVER WAY DECISION WENT, NAVON OFFERED FOLLOWING VIEWS. IF NEGOTIATING TRIUMVIRATE (RABIN, PERES, ALLON) ALL AGREED TO INTERIM SETTLEMENT, IT WOULD BE ACCEPTED OVERWHELMINGLY BY CABINET AND KNESSET. IF RABIN AND ALLON WERE FOR AND PERES WAS AGAINST, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE ACCEPTED IN THE CABINET, BUT WOULD BE A CLOSE THING IN KNESSET. HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD SPLIT RAFI MK'S, FOR EXAMPLE. IN ANY CASE, NAVON THOUGHT KEY QUESTION WAS (#) OF RABIN HIMSELF, WHOSE POLITICAL STATURE HAD INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY IN RECENT MONTHS AND WHOSE AUTHORITY ON MILITARY MATTERS WOULD CARRY WEIGHT. THOUGH HE WOULD DEEPLY REGRET, AND WOULD

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PERSONALLY OPPOSE, A DECISION AGAINST AN AGREEMENT (HOWEVER "BAD") NAVON DID NOT SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT RESISTANCE RABIN WOULD FACE FROM DOVISH AND MIDDLE GROUND CABINET MEMBERS AND MK'S WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO REVERSE DECISION AND CAUSE BREAKDOWN OF GOVT COALITION. CERTAINLY NOT IN SHORT TERM.

3. NAVON THEN EXPRESSED OPINION THAT IN ITS PRESENT BIND, GOI WAS ALMOST DESPERATELY EAGER FOR SOME MOVEMENT ON EGYPTIAN SIDE--AND FAILING THAT SOME

US ACTION--WHICH MIGHT PROVIDE A "BREAK-THROUGH" ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF AN AGREEMENT. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY MERELY FOR POLITICAL AMOUR PROPRE OF ISRAELI PRINCIPALS, BUT RATHER THAT RECENT EVENTS--RABIN VISIT, DINITZ CALLS ON PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY--HAD REVEALED SHOCKINGLY HARSH US DEMANDS IN VIW OF ISRAELIS WHO FELT RESENTFUL AT THIS (ALLEGED TREATMENT) AND ANGRY AT WHAT THEY TOOK TO BE AN ULTIMATUM THAT THE ISRAELI RESPONSE IN MATTER WOULD HAVE TO BE RECEIVED BEFORE END OF JUNE. IN ENSUING DISCUSSION, NAVON CONCEDED THAT TIME FACTOR COULD CONDITION WHOLE NEGOTIATING PICTURE AND THAT HE COULD UNDERSTAND HOW SOME AMERICANS MIGHT THINK ISRAEL USED TACTICS WHICH WOULD DELAY HARD DECISIONS. HE ALSO AGREED GOI HAD PERMITTED ITS OWN INITIAL NEGATIVE REACTION TO US POLICY "REQUIREMENTS" TO GET ALMOST DANGEROUSLY OUT OF CONTROL IN PRESS OVER WEEKEND. DESPITE THIS, HE SAID, IT WAS HIS JUDGMENT THAT SOME FURTHER US ACTION--HERE HE PRAISED PRESIDENT STATEMENT THAT US APPROACHES WERE BY NO MEANS ULTIMATIVE--EVEN COSMETIC ACTION, COULD PLAY EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT ROLE WHEN DECISION MAKING TIME ARRIVED. HE ASKED THAT THIS VIEW BE PASSED ALONG. WE ASSURED HIM IT WOULD BE.
TOON

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) OMISSION. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.
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